

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 03016 251035Z
ACTION NEA-11

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8163
USICA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3016

FOR NE/ARN-HOWELL
E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, OEXC, SY, US
SUBJECT: PROSPECTIVE SYRIAN PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION TO THE US

REF: STATE 116373

1. UNFORTUNATELY, DR. MUHSIN BILAL, CHAIRMAN OF THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL, BELIEVES HE HAS IN HAND A FORMAL INVITATION FROM CODEL ZABLOCKI FOR VISIT TO US. POLOFF HAD INFORMAL DISCUSSION ON THIS QUESTION WITH DR. SHUKRI, PROFESSOR OF LAW AT DAMASCUS UNIVERSITY, WHO INTENDS TO ACCOMPANY BILAL TO US. SHUKRI UNDERSTOOD TIGHT SCHEDULE OF CONGRESS DURING CURRENT SESSION AND SAID THAT BILAL WOULD BE AMENABLE TO A VISIT SOME TIME NEXT WINTER. WE DID NOT DISABUSE SHUKRI OF IDEA THAT FORMAL INVITATION STILL STANDS, IN HOPES THAT INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE MIGHT BE WILLING, AFTER ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR, TO NOMINALLY HOST A PORTION OF A PEOPLE'S COUNCIL DELEGATION VISIT TO THE US.

2. BELIEVE WE CAN MANAGE PROBLEM OF JOINT DELEGATION WITH ALGERIANS AND/OR PLO IN MUCH THE SAME WAY AS REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH UNION DISABUSED US OF IDEA OF FORMING JOINT SAUDI/EGYPTIAN/SYRIAN/MOROCCAN DELEGATION TO US (DAMASCUS 2964).

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3. BEFORE WE GO TO BILAL FORMALLY ON THIS QUESTION, I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE IN HAND FIRM COMMITMENT FROM DEPARTMENT AND ICA ALONG WITH SENSE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE ATTITUDE TOWARD HOSTING AT LEAST PORTION OF VISIT FOR BILAL, ET AL, NEXT WINTER, AFTER US ELECTIONS. I PREFER TO BE IN POSITION OF MAKING FIRM OFFER TO BILAL TO

OBVIATE SUSPICION WE OR CONGRESS ARE TOYING WITH HIM.
USICA COUNTRY PLAN ANTICIPATES A THREE-MAN PARLIAMENTARY
DELEGATION VISIT FOR FY'79. IN VIEW OF SHUKRI INDICATION
THAT BILAL WANTS HIM TO JOIN DELEGATION AND PRIORITY THIS
PROJECT HAS IN ICA DAMASCUS PLAN, WE MAY WISH TO INCREASE
NUMBER OF DELEGATION TO FOUR: THREE FROM PEOPLE'S COUNCIL
AND ONE LEGAL ADVISOR CUM INTERPRETER.

4. WE DO NOT INTEND TO DELIVER SAUNDERS LETTER TO BILAL
SINCE ENTIRE QUESTION OF ZABLOCKI NON-INVITATION MAY BE
FINESSED. PLEASE ADVISE.

PELLETREAU

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NNN

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